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TAGS: OPRC, KMDR, KPAO, GM

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQ HAITI MOTASSADEQ
IMMIGRATION;BERLIN

- A. Lead Stories Summary
- C. (Iraq) Escalation Of Fighting
- C. (Haiti) Powell Visit
- D. (Terror) Motassadeq's Release
- E. (U.S.) New Immigration Rules

- A. Lead Stories Summary

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HEADLINES

Welteke Vacates Post Temporarily (Frankfurter Allgemeine)

U.S. Troops Fire At Mosque (Sueddeutsche Zeitung)

Bundesbank Head Temporarily Vacates His Post (Die Welt)

U.S. Intensifies Offensive In Iraq (Frankfurter Rundschau)

Berlin's SPD Leader Steps Down (Tagesspiegel)

Strieder Leaves Posts, Mueller Succeeds Him As SPD Leader In Berlin (Berliner Zeitung)

Editorials focused on the most recent clashes in Iraq, the shareholders' meeting of DaimlerChrysler, Bundesbank President Welteke, and the budget deficits of EU Countries. ZDF-TV's early evening newscast heute opened with a story on the escalation of the fighting in Iraq, and ARD-TV's early evening newscast Tagesschau opened with a story on Bundesbank President Welteke.

C. (Iraq) Escalation Of Fighting

1. "Before An Uprising?"

Wolfgang Guenter Lerch opined in an editorial in center-right Frankfurter Allgemeine (4/8):

"An armed uprising against U.S. and British occupiers and its allied forces is not yet happening in Iraq, but an outbreak could only be a question of time. The most recent escalation of fighting and attacks is making us worry: From the Sunni triangle, mainly in Fallujah, up to the holy sites of the Shiites in central and southern Iraq, we witnessed bloody attacks that began almost simultaneously. It is likely that the Americans will have to send even more soldiers to the troubled country. What we must now fear are two things: that Shiites and Sunnis will closely cooperate and that the radicals among the latter could pull the moderate forces to their side. This will depend on whether influential Ayatollah al-Sistani abandons his previous restrained attitude. An unconfirmed report that the Americans transported POW Saddam Hussein secretly to the U.S. base in Qatar shows how nervous they are. They are probably afraid that old forces and new terrorists could launch a liberation attempt."

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2. "Bush Going Down In Chaos"

Andreas Oldag judged in an editorial in center-left Sueddeutsche Zeitung of Munich (4/8):

"A nightmare scenario is developing for President Bush. Three months before the planned handover of power, Iraq is going down in chaos.. Because of the heavy fighting in Sunni and Shiite regions, the president is in a dilemma. The U.S. forces urgently need re-enforcements.but if Bush gives in to his generals' request, he will come under increasing domestic pressure a few months before the

presidential elections.. The impression among U.S. voters that their president deceived them should play a major role in the coming weeks in the domestic controversy.. All this comes at the right time for Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry. The more Bush is going down in the Iraq chaos, the more Kerry will be able to capitalize on it and present himself as a credible alternative, while time is running out for Bush.. With respect to foreign policy, Bush will be able to save the confusing situation only if he succeeds in integrating Iraq into an international peace mission. There is no way around the UN.. But a solution becomes more difficult day by day, since a civil war is looming in Iraq among hostile ethnic groups."

3. "Religious Protective Shields"

Christoph von Marschall argued in an editorial in centrist Der Tagesspiegel of Berlin (4/8):

"The situation is highly dramatic and can determine the fate of the U.S. intervention in Iraq.. The uprising of a minority of radical Shiites is threatening to turn into a conflagration. And especially in this situation, it would be important for the Americans to keep cool, gain the support of the moderate majority, and isolate the hot heads. But reports that the Americans bombed a mosque will raise the opposition even of well-meaning Muslims against the occupiers.. At a closer look, it becomes clear that the insurgents used the mosque as a religious protective shield.but the problem is that the irritated Iraqi people do not want to know this so precisely. The U.S. army should have known this. They will win the struggle against the militant Shiites only if they win the hearts of moderate Shiites."

4. "Courage To Use The Whip"

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Business daily Financial Times Deutschland of Hamburg (4/8) argued:

"In view of the escalation of violence, the allies have no choice. They must now use all their force against the opponents of democracy in Iraq. This is the only possibility of reaching their goal of handing over power to the Iraqi people in June. This is the only chance for the British and Americans to prevent the country from going down in civil war after the withdrawal of forces. The currently more moderate forces will engage only if they are no longer afraid of radicals like al-Sadr. They need a clear signal from the occupiers that they will not give in to the claims of someone like al-Sadr. All efforts by the allies to establish a functioning political system and to have the people participate in it will be in vain if the radical forces plunge the country into chaos..

"The fight against radicals like al-Sadr cannot be conducted without entirely avoiding wounding Iraqi feelings. The short-term outrage of religious leaders and the faithful in the country must be subordinated to the long-term goal of creating stability. The problem is that the United States has shown not too little, but too much, consideration for the Iraqis. Instead of using tough measures right from the start against al-Sadr, it tried to 'pacify' him, which only strengthened him. They must now act more resolutely. This war will not be won in peace, but in war."

5. Left-of-center Nuernberger Nachrichten (4/8) opined:

"In view of the dangerous escalation in Iraq, malicious glee would be inappropriate. The looming escalation of violence to a conflagration that gets out of control is not in our slightest interest. Europe in the immediate neighborhood of a region that goes down in chaos and violence and turning into a new center of Islamic terror would have to bear the brunt of long-term consequences. What we do not need is the malice of those who were right in their warnings against the implications of an invasion adventure, but what we need is U.S. acknowledgment that it made false assessments even up to the most recent weeks."

6. Centrist Abendzeitung of Munich (4/8) said:

"The unstoppable violence is threatening George W. Bush's core argument for the coming election campaign that the world has become safer since Saddam's ouster. Before

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our eyes, the opposite is being presented to us day after day. U.S. soldiers are dying because of false assessments, terror is ravaging on a global scale. In this situation, NSA Rice must now tell the Senate why it did not have al-Qaida on its radar screens before 9/11. The war against terrorism is increasingly turning out to be nothing but a flurry of activities rather than a well-conceived effort. But this fight is much too important to leave it to dilettantes and amateurs."

7. Center-right Maerkische Allgemeine Zeitung of Potsdam (4/8) had this to say:

"We do not see a trace of stability in Iraq. On the contrary. The guerilla war is under full steam and if bombs are dropped on mosques, the masses will support even the radicals. This would then indeed be a second Vietnam -- but with one difference: this time there is no way back. The Americans cannot afford to leave Iraq to its own devices. Not only because this would damage their credibility, but mainly because Iraq would turn into a stronghold of uncertainty and terrorism. As bitter as it may be, the occupiers have only one choice: they must fight the radicals with all toughness."

C. (Haiti) Powell Visit

1. "Haiti "

Hildegard Stausberg judged in an editorial in right-of-center Die Welt of Berlin (4/8)

"The members of Caricom have now accepted Haiti's ex-president Aristide's view that the Americans forced him into exile.. This is thwarting Washington's original idea of integrating the Caribbean nations and the UN into the reconstruction of the country. This is why Secretary Powell's visit to Haiti was not unproblematic. The United States can be lucky that it has the support of French, Canadian, and Chilean forces, thus avoiding the impression of a pure U.S. intervention. But Prime Minister Latortue, who was installed with U.S. support, can only succeed in pacifying the country if he domestically integrates Aristide's supporters and is recognized by his neighbors. U.S. economic assistance, which Powell announced, can only alleviate the misery but cannot create a real improvement until the Haitians are able to help themselves. It could even have implications for the Bush administration if the 'Black Caucus' is taking advantage of the Haitian mess for

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their political purposes. For them, an Aristide who was ousted by the bad white establishment comes at the right time."

D. (Terror) Motassadeq's Release

1. "Defeat"

Center-right Frankfurter Allgemeine (4/8) editorialized:

"The release of Moroccan Motassadeq - like that of his compatriot Mzoudi before - shakes the confidence in our courts' judgments and effectiveness. The man audaciously told the court that he rejects violence as a means of achieving political and religious goals, but he admitted at the same time that he was trained in a military al-Qaida camp. He staid in contact with Hamburg's 9/11 terrorists even after they moved to the U.S., and shared their murderous hatred of Jews. Against this background, the reasons the court gave for Motassadeq's release weigh lightly: third-hand evidence from the terror suspect Binalshibh and bizarre evidence from Said Bahaji, who wrote in a letter to his mother that Motassadeq had nothing to do with the 9/11 mass murder. But it is neither this evidence nor the court's blindness that freed Motassadeq. The Hamburg State Court's hands are tied, because the American and German governments withheld the witness Binalshibh. The Federal Court only said the secrecy interests of intelligence forces must not create a burden for the accused. One should not have doubts about the courts, but about politicians who cause such defeats."

2. "American Secrets"

Hans Leyendecker commented in center-left Sueddeutsche Zeitung of Munich (4/8):

"Motassadeq's release does not come as a surprise. Judges of the Hamburg court only acted consistently. They had no choice. The message of the Federal Court ordering a retrial was all too clear. It accused the court of having neglected essential parts of the evidence, for example the witness Binalshibh, who is in U.S. detention. The court was not able to recognize the testimony from the U.S. Binalshibh, the suspected logistic mastermind of the mass murder in N.Y., which might have exonerated Motassadeq. The collision of intelligence interests and the rule of law must

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not fall by the wayside. The retrial will start in a few months. Other influential terror suspects, whom the U.S. holds in unknown places, could be called in as witnesses, but if the U.S. continues its secret policy, it will increase Motassadeq's chances of acquittal."

3. "Law and Terror"

Jan Ruebel opined in right-of-center Die Welt of Berlin (4/8):

"There was a lack of transparency from the beginning of the first trial. The U.S. authorities are hiding the most important witness, Ramzi Binalshibh, for security reasons, thus making it impossible for German courts to shed light in all corners in their search for truth. Yesterday's release marks an important step in the impasse the court has reached. It will only get out of it if the state stops withholding evidence. Courts stick to the principle of innocent until proven guilty. That is not a setback in the fight against terror, because we can only win it through the

rule of law."

4. "In Favor Of Extremists"

Jost Mueller-Neuhof said in centrist Der Tagesspiegel of Berlin (4/8):

"The fight against terror - the one fought with legal weapons, which presents suspects to courts, respects the presumption of innocence and human rights - is suffering a defeat at the moment. Motassadeq's compatriot Mzoudi is free, Motassadeq as well, and both were very close to the terror pilot Atta and his cell. They shared the Islamist furor, supported the group, and nobody should believe that they despised the 9/11 mass murders or had any sympathy for the victims and their relatives. But a court is no battlefield and judges are no soldiers. They must not convict somebody if they are not convinced about the guilt. This guilt is defined not by morals, political opportunism or social condemnation, but by strict legal facts. In this respect, not a lot will remain, because Motassadeq's assistance and sinister threats could only justify a conviction if the court could recognize the entire evidence. That is not possible because the U.S. withholds the most important witness and terror suspect. Innocent until proven guilty - that must be strictly accepted. The U.S. administration will continue to bar the witness because he

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would exonerate Motassadeq. It does not understand that it gambles with Motassadeq's conviction. How should it, since law is just an obstacle that must be overcome? George W. Bush has his own laws in his campaign. We had better stick to ours."

5. "Independent"

Astrid Hoelscher wrote in left-of-center Frankfurter Rundschau (4/8):

"Mounir al Motassadeq, the temporary administrator of the 9/11 terrorists' accounts and flats, trained in a Taliban camp, is not free of suspicion. His conditional release does not mean that courts were defeated by terror. It rather shows the rule of law dominates despite serious disputes. Courts do not sacrifice the principle of a fair trial for their own defense. Judges in Germany and the U.S. are politically hard to assess; they are independent. They are therefore not part of the coalition against terror that does not look for evidence, but only requires belief and determination. Being so unreliable, they are cut off from the flow of information. However, the weird Binalshibh testimony would be of dubious value anyway, if a court were to see it. Who can assess the pressure under which the statement was made? The establishment of truth in times of terror and secrecy remains a desperate, but laudable effort."

E. (U.S.) New Immigration Rules

1. "Number One State Enemy"

Florian Guessgen opined in an editorial in business daily Financial Times Deutschland of Hamburg (4/8):

"Since 9/11 the U.S. administration has been more afraid of foreigners than ever before, and is now building a fortress step by step.. With its moves, the Bush administration has decided on a policy that gives security priority over freedom. These intentions seem to be

legitimate, but the plans of Homeland Secretary Ridge contradict not only the U.S. foundation myth of no frontiers but also the democratic foundation of the U.S. fortress.. The control of fingerprints is more or less unproblematic..

"But a problem that goes beyond questions of style is

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another control tool: CAPPs II.. It is not only a model example of the efforts of the U.S government to collect at random data of foreigners, but the project is also provoking protests from data protection commissioners in the United States and Europe. Irrespective of this, the EU is about to sign an agreement on the transfer of passenger data to the U.S. The EU governments are thus giving in to U.S. pressure to allow the United States even more access to the private life of its citizens.. In view of the terrorist threat, the limits between well-founded suspicion and prejudices are blurring. The U.S. government must work out transparent and accessible criteria for everybody.. The immigration policy of the U.S. government is damaging the foundations of a society that, in the past, distinguished itself because it was so open to foreigners.."

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